

'Permanent posts for 12,800 contract docs in three years'

KUALA LUMPUR: A total of 12,800 contract doctors are expected to be absorbed into permanent positions within the next three years, says the Prime Minister.

Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim (PH-Tambun) said the government, through Budget 2023, had allocated an amount of RM19.7bil for emoluments, which saw an increase of RM3bil from the previous years.

"Of this RM3bil additional allocation, RM1.2bil was allocated for pay rise, RM600mil for contract appointments and RM1.1bil for absorption to permanent positions.

"For 2023, it means that a total of RM1.7bil was allocated for recruiting more contract doctors and to absorb existing ones to permanent positions," he said in response to Datuk Seri Madius Tangau (PH-Tuaran) in Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

With the allocation in place, Anwar said 12,800 contract doctors would be in permanent positions in three years.

"This year, we have absorbed 4,300 contract doctors into permanent positions.

"I hope that everyone can understand that we don't have any intention to look down (on the doctors' demands) as they have been serving us well," he added.

Anwar also announced that on-call allowances would be extended to medical officers on duty at six public health clinics involved in the "overcrowding reduction project".

The extension of operating hours at the clinics were among the initiatives by the



The PM's promise:

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- Bernama

Health Ministry to address overcrowding at hospitals' Emergency Department.

In an immediate reaction to Anwar's announcement, the president of the Malaysian Medical Association, Dr Muruga Raj, said the news provided some certainty for affected doctors.

"We welcome the government's commitment of 4,300 permanent positions for this year for contract doctors, and its pledge to provide 12,800 permanent positions within three years.

"We can see that the government is now making bigger strides towards resolving the longstanding issue.

"The fact that there are now 4,300 permanent positions instead of 1,500 which was committed to in Budget 2023 shows that it is indeed possible for more permanent positions to be

created.

"Nevertheless, we applaud the government for making it happen," he said in a statement and thanked Anwar for the move to extend on-call allowances to medical officers at the six government clinics involved in the pilot project to tackle overcrowding.

However, Hartal Doktor Kontrak said 12,800 permanent slots might not be sufficient.

Its spokesperson, who wanted to be only known as Dr Muhammad, said there were over 20,000 doctors on contract, with an addition of 5,000 coming into service annually.

"This works out to be 15,000 over the course of three years, and a total of 35,000 on contract in the entire workforce.

"If there are 12,800 slots, that means only 36% will be absorbed, or one in three. That definitely

doesn't give any sort of assurance of job security to the junior doctors. (It is) unlikely that this will stop the doctors from leaving the service and further worsen the state of healthcare in the country," he said when contacted.

Meanwhile, the organiser of the three-day nationwide contract doctor strike, Mogok Doktor Kontrak, deactivated its Instagram page yesterday - the second of its three-day strike. Attempts to get further clarification were unsuccessful following the deactivation of this social media channel that was initially used to mobilise the strike.